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ABSTRACT

This guide aids in understanding the film, "Schindlers List," and how to present it for classroom use. The guide contains: (1) an historical overview of Krakow (Poland); (2) guidelines for viewing; (3) preparation for viewing; (4) topics for discussion after viewing; (5) activities after viewing; and (6) classroom enrichment activities (Allan Scholl). Other segments include: (1) "Film the Holocaust" (Judith E. Doneson); (2) "Suggested Films" (Judith E. Doneson); and (3) "Questions Raised by the Holocaust" (Alex Grobman). The reference section includes resources of a general nature, on pre-war Europe, the children of the Holocaust, rescuers and resisters, the Christian response, and films. (EH)

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Schindler's List
A Viewers Guide

Martyrs Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust

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SCHINDLER'S LIST

A VIEWERS GUIDE

This guide has been prepared:

- to help make sure that seeing the film becomes a learning experience for all, and
- to help teachers, parents, and group leaders with some of the moral and emotional issues raised by Schindler's List



INTRODUCTION

Schindler's List—a motion picture experience requiring special viewer preparation.

Schindler's List—a film based on the true story of Oskar Schindler, a Sudeten-German industrialist, who moved east to Krakow, Poland, at the outbreak of WW II to seek his fortune, and saved the lives of 1,200 Jews by employing them in his factories. Schindler could not ignore what he saw. The film follows him as he rises above his love of money and possessions, risks his own life, and eventually loses his fortune, as he secretly works to save the lives of his Jewish factory workers, who are the names on Schindler's list.

Schindler's List—a compelling portrait of a puzzling, self-seeking man who risked his own life to save others and become one of the first "Righteous Gentiles" (moral non-Jewish people) honored by Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust museum in Israel.

An Amblin Entertainment Film, released by Universal Pictures, directed by Steven Spielberg, based on the novel by Thomas Keneally, screenplay by Steven Zaillian, with Liam Neeson and Ben Kingsley. ■



Memorial to Jewish victims at Krakow-Plaszow with Polish and Hebrew inscriptions. Photograph by Ira Nowinski. Martyrs Memorial Collection.

KRAKOW: Historical Overview

At one time the political and cultural center of the Polish nation, and the site of Poland's first university, Krakow, located in southern Poland, is known to have had a thriving Jewish population by the 1300s. These early Jewish settlers were active as merchants, traders, and minters.

During the time of Casimir the Great (1333-1370), many Jews moved across the Vistula river into Kazimierz, his newly established city. The two cities later merged and became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from the 18th century split-up of Poland until after WWI. In the 1930s, Krakow's sixty thousand Jews made up one quarter of its population.

Three thousand Krakovian Jews survived the war. Today between 500 and 1,000 Jews, their average age 75, live in Krakow.

UNESCO has declared Krakow one of the 12 great cities of the world and worthy of preservation. Thus, many of the Jewish sites from the 14th century, the Old Synagogue on Szeroka Street, the 16th century Ramoh synagogue, and parts of the 1941 ghetto wall still remain. ■

KRAKOW AND PLASZOW DURING THE HOLOCAUST

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- On September 6, 1939, the Nazis occupied Krakow, a city with a population of approximately a quarter of a million people. Persecution of the sixty thousand Jews in Krakow began shortly thereafter.
 - On October 26, Krakow became the capital of the Generalgouvernement, which included Warsaw, Lublin, Radom, and Lvov.
 - On November 28, a Jewish Council (Judenrat) was officially established to carry out Nazi orders.
 - On December 5 and 6, the Germans terrorized the Jewish quarters and burned down a number of synagogues.
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- In May 1940, Jews began to be driven

out from Krakow to other areas in the Generalgouvernement. The forced labor camp at Plaszow was established on the site of two Jewish cemeteries in late 1940.

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- By March 1941, more than 40,000 Jews were forced to leave Krakow, after having all their property taken from them. Those who remained were forced to live in a special part of the city called a ghetto in Podgorze in the southern part of Krakow.
- By late 1941, 18,000 Jews, including several thousands from nearby cities, were forced into the ghetto.
- The sending of people from the ghetto to the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Belzec

execution camps started in May.

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- Jews who worked as slave labor in factories in and out of the ghetto were sent to Plaszow, which was in a Krakow suburb. Although the number of prisoners varied, by the end of 1943, there were 12,000 prisoners at the camp. The camp also housed several Gypsy families.
 - Amon Goeth, one of five men who served as camp commander, held this position from February 1943 to September 1944.
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- In January, Plaszow became a concentration camp, and 600 SS men replaced the Ukrainian guards.
 - During May and June, the number of prisoners at Plaszow increased to

between 22,000 and 24,000. A total of 150,000 prisoners—including Polish, Hungarian, Belgian, and French Jews; Soviet POWs; Poles; and Gypsies—passed through the camp. Eighty thousand were killed there.

• As the Soviet Army neared Plaszow during the summer of 1944, the Nazis attempted to remove all traces of their crimes by digging up the mass graves and burning the bodies. Most of the prisoners remaining were sent to other concentration camps or other execution camps.

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The last prisoners in Plaszow were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 14, 1945. ■

GUIDELINES FOR VIEWING

Who Should See This Film?

by Benjamin Hulkower, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist and Consultant to the Martyrs Memorial

This is not an adventure film. It is not fantasy. It is based on real life experienced by real people, and it is not an easy film to watch.

- **CAUTION:** Children under 13 should not see this film. They aren't mature enough to handle this material. Parental discretion is certainly advised.

- Although there is violence in Schindler's List, other films have more violence and bloodier scenes. Although those films are seen as "entertainment" and considered acceptable for viewing by some parents for younger children, parents must be cautioned about this film.

- Children above the age of 13 should see *Schindler's List* with their family or in a group setting (temple, synagogue, church, youth movement) with experienced adult leadership. Preferably, it should be a family experience.

- This is a three-hour film. Try to schedule viewing at an hour that will permit ample time for discussion and reflection afterwards.

PREPARATION FOR VIEWING

It is particularly important to have careful, age-appropriate preparation when young people are involved.

- Emphasize that the film is based on fact. During the Holocaust, which means the slaughter of the Jews by the Nazis, Jewish people lived with the knowledge that they could be murdered simply because they were Jews. No excuse was needed for them to be killed. However, they did need an excuse to be allowed to live. One way was to be classified as an "essential worker," which meant that your trade or skills were essential to the German war effort. Thus, being "essential workers" kept Schindler's Jews alive initially. Schindler's cleverness and skill saved them later.

- Visit the Martyrs Memorial or, if you live outside the Los Angeles area, your own local Holocaust museum or learning center to help set the stage.

- Use the list of materials prepared for you at

the end of this guide and visit the library for age-appropriate books.

From the many choices listed below, those showing the film will of course have to select the topics and activities suitable for the group seeing the film. ■

Oskar Schindler, after the war, with some of the Jews he rescued, in Munich, 1946.
Left to right: Manzi Rosner, Mundak Horowitz, Mita Pfefferberg (Page), Oskar Schindler, Rosa Kippel. Seated: Nusia Horowitz, Olek Rosner, Pesho Bloch. Photo courtesy of Leopold Page.



TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AFTER VIEWING

The first response for most viewers after the film will be silence. After an appropriate period of silence and reflection, discussion is needed. Discussion should occur as soon as possible after viewing. Topics for discussion may include the following:

- What are your immediate feelings? Describe your emotional response. Did you

1. Feel shock, believe it didn't happen, deny it happened?
2. Feel anger/rage, fear/terror, grief/sorrow, confusion/self-doubt?
3. Feel out of control?
4. Have feelings of loss, of being powerless, of loss of trust in people, of loss of trust in G-d?

- What scene was most striking? Most soul-stirring? Why?
- What did you find most distressing? Why?
- What did you find most inspiring? Why?
- How do you feel about Schindler? Did you like him? What do you think made him do what he did? At what point do you think he started to change? Why does your opinion of him change during the course of the film?
- Discuss the topics of conscience, gratitude, and doing good for others.
- How do you think the Nazis defended their actions? What are your feelings about the camp commander Amon Goeth? What do you think made him do what he did?
- Describe and discuss the children in the film. How are they different from children of today?
- Discuss the Jewish response—the apparent submitting, the creative resistance, and the efforts to preserve a sense of community.
- Discuss the idea of righteous, or honorable,

individuals. Is there such a thing as an altruistic, or unselfish, personality? How does one develop one? Can you be trained to have one? How can you act in a righteous, or honorable, manner? What would keep you from doing so?

- Why do you suppose that most, if not all, of the "Righteous Gentiles" do not consider themselves to be heroes?
- Think of one situation in your life that you feel is not right. What do you see yourself doing about it? What is your plan for changing the situation?
- Have you ever seen another student being picked on? What did you do or fail to do? Why?
- If you knew that speaking up for someone would cause you to be the target of your group's anger, what would you do?
- Recall a time when you were quiet even though your conscience wanted you to speak up or take action. What did you do or fail to do? What do you think you should have done?
- What groups are likely to be discriminated against? Why?
- What do overweight people, short people, unattractive people, women, Jews, Blacks, Latinos, poor athletes, poor people, and poorly dressed people have in common?
- Would you risk your life and the lives of family members to save people you didn't know? What moved Righteous Gentiles to do just that?
- Ask yourself when was the last time you showed prejudice against someone. Explain what happened and why.
- Identify prejudices in your community.
- What is prejudice? What do you think causes prejudice? What are the consequences of prejudice? What are some ways to overcome prejudice? ■



Leopold Page and Oskar Schindler, Paris, November, 1963.
Photo courtesy, Leopold Page

ACTIVITIES AFTER VIEWING

- If a hate crime has recently been committed in the community, have students identify motives, actions, remedies, and victims.
- Poll the class to determine how many students have lost relatives in the Holocaust or other political circumstances. Ask those who respond to tell about their relatives, or ask students to tell about victims they have heard of.
- Have students keep a hate or prejudice notebook for two weeks. Ask them to write down all incidents of hate or prejudice, including incidents they hear or see firsthand.
- Stage a courtroom trial in which one student plays Amon Goeth and others play defense attorney, prosecuting attorney, and members of the jury.
- Select a student to play a character from the film. Have another student or a panel of students interview the character chosen. Discuss the questions and the responses.
- Have students draw a picture that shows their feelings about some part of the Holocaust. Discuss their pictures.
- Have students read a national newspaper for several days and note the number of articles and incidents in which prejudice plays a part. ■

CLASSROOM ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

by Allan Schoil, Ph.D., textbook author and educator

The dignity of every human being and the sweep and drama of history are two concepts that a teacher can lead students to grasp through viewing the film *Schindler's List*. To do so, the teacher must help students learn about the major events of the Nazi era from 1933 to 1945 and the even narrower period covered in the story of Oskar Schindler. The following suggested activities are provided to assist the teacher in getting students to begin to think about the issues and events that are part of this film. They can be used in any order as individual or group assignments.

BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM

1. Ask students to read a history book for information about World War II and the Holocaust and to discuss their findings with the class.
2. Have students study the geography of Europe during the period 1933-1945 and prepare maps on:
 - Territorial changes in Europe after World War I
 - Germany in 1932, 1939, 1941
 - Europe during World War II
 - Poland before World War I, after World War I, in 1940
 - The location of concentration camps in Poland during World War II
3. Write the following terms on the board: Holocaust, genocide, ghetto, the "Jewish Question," antisemitism, pogrom, Nuremberg Laws, concentration camps, extermination camps, Adolf Eichmann, labor camps, SS, Generalgouvernement, "Final Solution," war of extermination, and "Righteous Among the Nations." Ask students to look up the meanings of these terms in dictionaries, textbooks, or other reference books; use each in a written sentence; and then discuss the terms as preparation for viewing the film.
4. Have students organize a panel discussion on the topic "Why the Holocaust Happened."
5. Have students read about how Adolf Hitler made use of existing antisemitism to attack Jews and others in Germany and Europe during the period 1933-1945. Ask them for evidence from newspapers, magazines, or TV of the existence of antisemitism today. Ask if they could be moved by propaganda today and how they might be moved.

6. Have students work in cooperative groups to organize a classroom presentation on the Nazi occupation of Poland.
7. Ask selected students to prepare a "You Are There" program on the subject of life in the Krakow ghetto or other Polish ghettos.
8. Assign a group of students the task of developing an imaginary panel discussion between Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, and Adolf Eichmann on the topic of the Jews and the Final Solution.
9. Select some students to look into the topic propaganda and how it was used in Nazi Germany, and have them report their findings to the class, using illustrations if possible. Ask the class to take notes on the report and then draw a simple propaganda poster on any modern topic. Have them shown in class, and ask students to judge the effectiveness of each poster.

ACTIVITIES AFTER VIEWING

1. Ask students to tell how they might react in a situation similar to the one faced by Oskar Schindler.
2. Have students imagine that they are a newspaper reporter in the city of Krakow and their assignment is to interview Amon Goeth, the commander of the Plaszow concentration camp. Ask them to develop a list of interview questions and discuss them in class together, and then have the students write a story of the interview for their newspaper.
3. Ask each student to write an imaginary dialogue between himself or herself and Oskar Schindler, Amon Goeth, or Itzak Stern. The dialogue should include the views of the man being talked to.

Continued on next page

FILM AND THE HOLOCAUST

by Judith E. Doneson, Ph.D., author and lecturer

We live in an age in which mass media—such as TV, radio, and films—strongly influence our lives. Films in theaters and those made for TV affect every part of our lives and have become one of our most important teachers. Films—both fiction and nonfiction—are indeed “teachers,” and can be used to teach people about the destruction of the European Jews.

The Holocaust, the planned destruction of a people, was unlike any other mass destruction in human history. Yet there is little documentary film on the actual process, and none on the death camps. Clearly then, most films on the Holocaust are re-creations of an event that took place in the past. This suggests an immense responsibility for those film makers who choose to represent the Holocaust on film; they are the ones who often determine how this event will be remembered in the minds of the public.

The teacher who uses the material of the film maker in teaching about the Holocaust also shoulders a huge burden. Films offer many different interpretations of the Final Solution, Hitler's term for the murder of the Jews. Some of these interpretations add to our understanding of the Holocaust. Other interpretations contain incorrect information or outright antisemitic material and tell us what some people thought of the Jews at the time or what they think of the Jews now. Therefore, teachers must know the films they use. Otherwise, they will give students the wrong message and a false view of history.

Because of the power of the power of film, those who think that all people should know about the destruction of the European Jews must keep up with the latest films on the Holocaust so that they can appropriately praise or criticize them. Also, the creative community should continue to make films on the Holocaust so that the public will be aware of this unique tragedy and will be prepared to act in the future when any group is persecuted.

For further information about rental or purchase of films contact local Holocaust resource centers, Association of Holocaust Organizations, or The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. ■



Tombstone Krakow. Photograph by Iro Nowinski. Muryrs Memorial Collection.

SUGGESTED FILMS

by Judith E. Doneson, Ph.D.

FILMS ON POLAND BEFORE THE WAR

- The Jews of Poland. (Five cities: Bialystok, Lvov, Krakow, Vilna, and Warsaw). Footage filmed in Poland in 1938, 1939 by Yizhak and Shaul Goskind.
- Image Before My Eyes., 1981, USA.
- The Last Chapter, 1961, USA.

FILMS DEALING WITH RIGHTEOUS GENTILES

NONFICTION

- Act of Faith, 1961, Denmark.
- As If It Were Yesterday, 1980, Belgium.
- The Avenue of the Just, 1978, USA.
- The Courage to Care, 1985, USA.
- Distant Journey, 1949, Czechoslovakia.
- So Many Miracles, 1987, Canada.
- Voices from the Attic, 1988, USA.
- Weapons of the Spirit, 1987, USA.

FICTION

- The Attic: The Hiding of Anne Frank, 1988, USA (TV).
- Conspiracy of Hearts, 1960, Great Britain.
- The Diary of Anne Frank, 1959, USA.

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4. Assign students either individually or in groups to find out about Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust memorial museum in Israel, and report their findings to the class.
5. Ask students to interview Holocaust survivors about their personal experiences during and after the war. Have the students organize the information into an oral classroom presentation.
6. Have students contact Holocaust museums to invite survivors into the classroom to discuss their lives.
7. Organize a classroom debate on the topic “Given the same situation, I would have acted exactly like Oskar Schindler.”
8. Ask a group of students to develop a model or large plan of the Plaszow camp and then use it to illustrate a class presentation on Nazi camps in Poland and elsewhere in Europe. ■

QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE HOLOCAUST

by Alex Grobman, Ph.D., Director, Martyrs Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust

Even though fifty years have passed since the end of the Second World War, many people around the world rightly show a continued, even a growing interest in the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., which recently opened, cannot physically accommodate the number of people who want to visit the museum each day. The Association of Holocaust Organizations lists over ninety Holocaust institutions throughout the United States and Canada.

What is the attraction of these Holocaust learning centers and museums? Are people searching for answers and if so, what are their questions? Do they wonder how the Holocaust could have been coldly carried out by one of the most cultured societies in the Western World. A country that gave us Bach, Beethoven, Schiller, Brahms, Kant, Goethe, and Hegel? The same country in which Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, could claim that those involved in the destruction of the Jewish people had remained decent?

Do they ask why the German people mobilized their entire society—the civil service, the courts, the scientific and business communities, the centralized government, modern technology, and the military and police force—for the destruction of the Jewish people? A people that gave them Freud, Einstein, Pappenheim, Kafka, Teller, and Wilder?

Do they ask where Western society was when a million and a half children were sent to the gas chambers or were brutally murdered simply because they were Jews? Do they ask why the religious institutions to which many of them belong abandoned the Jews as did the rest of Western civilization?

Do they know that Jews are not in a contest to see who suffered the most or who are the greatest victims? Do they know that by learn-



Eastern Europe during the Holocaust.

ing about the fate of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, they will gain a better understanding about the nature of Western civilization and culture?

The Jews were not a "dissident (differing) minority" in "a remote corner of the world, but by virtue of its thinkers were a important component (part) of European civilization which dominated the pre-Holocaust world," observes Henry Feingold. "What died at Auschwitz was not merely the corpus (body) of a people but Europe's hope that its social system can endure. Who can escape the bitter irony (cruel joke) that European Jewry was destroyed by a perverse (corrupt) use of the very industrial process which is the hallmark (sign) of modernity (advanced society)?"

The Holocaust raises the question of whether society will allow Jews and other minority groups to live in its midst as a people with their own group consciousness. Antisemitism and racism are very much a part of American society and Western culture, and will remain so for some time to come. The Jewish people have succeeded in surviving antisemitism, but whether humanity can "survive its persisting nature" remains to be seen. ■

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SCHINDLER'S LIST A VIEWERS GUIDE

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For information regarding Holocaust educational resources throughout the United States and Canada contact the Martyrs Memorial at (213) 852-3242 or the Association of Holocaust Organizations at (718) 225-0378 or the Jewish Labor Committee (212) 477-0707. ©1994 Martyrs Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles

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